What if they threw a crusade, and nobody came?

A slightly whimsical look at an extremist group who are doing their best to stir up social unrest in Britain at the time of the Royal Wedding.

When Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer way back in 1981, there was a certain amount of anti-Royalist activity up and down the country; in Leeds for example, an "anti-wedding march" was organised by the usual suspects. Three decades on, there are still anti-Royalist voices heard throughout England's green and at times not so pleasant land, and this time they have been augmented by those who want to abolish not just the Monarchy but democracy, freedom, national governments, and everything else. Fortunately, no one – no one who matters – is listening.

While the members of the Forest Hill Society in South London were planning their modest street celebrations for April 29, the members of Muslims Against Crusades were railing against "the tyrannical British government and royal family."

Who are Muslims Against Crusades? Founded only last year, the group is the successor to Al-Muhajiroun, which operated openly in the UK from 1986, disbanded, ostensibly in 2004, was relaunched in June 2009, and finally banned under the *Terrorism Act, 2000*. Although technically Muslims Against Crusades is not the same group, it is an open secret that the only real difference between the two is their names. For one thing, the new group enjoys the patronage of Anjem Choudhary, the former leader of Al-Muhajiroun. If nothing else, this demonstrates the futility of banning any organisation that is not engaged in openly illegal activity, however reprehensible its agenda.

So what does Muslims Against Crusades do? First and foremost, it is actually a crusading organisation! Its agenda appears to be broadly similar to that of the notorious Westboro Baptist Church in the United States – hate the world, and make the world hate us in turn. While the Church delights in picketing the funerals of soldiers killed in action, and mocking America for legalising homosexuality, Muslims Against Crusades has burned poppies outside the Albert Hall on Remembrance Day, and heckled British troops on their return from Afghanistan.

Although it has earned notoriety on the ground, Muslims Against Crusades has a fair presence in cyberspace, and in spite of its anti-Imperialist rhetoric, it has no qualms about patronising the Great Satan – after all, business is business. A basic web search reveals that its domain is registered to Abdullah Muhammad c/o Dynadot Privacy, which is based in California. It is possible to register a domain name in Libya, but in this instance, Uncle Sam may just be the lesser of evils, because according to their website:

“Drawing from recent events in occupied Libya, it has become apparent that the evils of the apostate Muammar Gaddafi bare a strong semblance to the atrocities sanctioned by the royal family, principally Queen Elizabeth II...”

The Queen will not be amused with the comparison, and she is probably not amused either to see her grandsons Harry and William portrayed as Nazis wearing swastika armbands. The armbands were not of course actually worn by the Princes, but were affixed by means of a picture editing program, *Adobe Photoshop* perhaps, the headquarters of which is also located in California.

Prince William is branded a Nazi because he is said to have expressed a desire to serve in Afghanistan; his brother actually has. It does not occur to Muslims Against Crusades that these are two young men who have elected to serve their country, and are anxious to be seen as eschewing special privileges. Currently, William is serving with the RAF, flying helicopter rescue missions in the North of England. Harry’s presence in Afghanistan is known to have caused consternation in some circles, but now that he has proved himself, there is no need for him to return.

Muslims Against Crusades had intended to demonstrate outside Westminster Abbey during the Royal Wedding, but this non-event has now been cancelled. Apparently, it “has recently come to our attention, from the sincere advice of reputable Muslim scholars and activists such as Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad and Sheikh Anjem Choudary, that the threat of an imminent attack against those attending the royal wedding on 29th April 2011, is too strong to substantiate the presence of any Muslims within the locality.”

That might just be construed as a terrorist threat, but it is of course bluster.

But what do mainstream Muslims think? According to the *Birmingham Mail* of April 19, a spokesman for Green Lane Mosque, Small Heath said: “These marches do not serve the cause of Islam, Muslims in general or the wider community.”

That sentiment is almost certainly echoed by the overwhelming majority of Moslems, including the Muslim Council of Britain, the largest umbrella organisation of Moslems in the UK. Muslims Against Crusades did not respond to an E-Mail inquiry, probably because they were too busy praying for world peace.

It has to be said though that if they were to tone down their rhetoric they might earn a simulacrum of credibility from the mainstream media. It is not only fanatics or Moslems who have reservations about the ongoing British and more generally Western involvement in the Middle East, but mocking the funeral processions of young soldiers, insulting the war dead of all nations by burning poppies, and making veiled threats against the second in line to the throne and his soon-to-be wife will not endear anyone either to Moslems or their holy book. Perhaps that is the point?

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